

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 003753

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: LEYLA ZANA HOSTS LUNCH FOR EU, U.S. DIPLOMATS

Classified by A/DCM James Moore, E.O. 12958, reasosn 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Leyla Zana and the three other recently-released DEP deputies hosted a lunch on July 5 for diplomats from the EU and U.S. Although Zana and the other deputies said people in southeastern Turkey do not want violence, some EU diplomats -- and we -- left the lunch frustrated that Zana and the others stopped short of condemning the PKK (aka Kongra Gel, KHK, etc). Zana and the others put forth no new ideas for the southeast. End Summary

A Media Event

¶2. (C) The lunch, which the Zana and the other hosts billed as an opportunity "to meet and exchange ideas," was a media event. A swarm of Turkish electronic and print media was present outside the restaurant, and Zana and the deputies permitted them inside for photographs but no questions at the top of the lunch. As EU President, the Dutch Embassy reportedly tried unsuccessfully to postpone the lunch due to concerns about media hype. The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) was reportedly also concerned the lunch would be a publicity stunt; although Zana invited FM Gul, no MFA official attended. Embassy Ankara Deputy Political Counselor attended for the U.S.

Zana Talks the Talk....

¶3. (U) Zana made prepared remarks at the beginning of the lunch. She cited the "winds of change" in Turkey and called on all parties to "forget the past." She pointed out that she selected white decor for the lunch to symbolize a "white page in politics and a purged and pure political stance." She called for a new era of peace, reconciliation and dialogue, and pledged to pursue those goals "even at the cost of being politically isolated."

¶4. (U) She said that during her highly-publicized visit to the southeast following her release that she found the people there want to abandon "arms, denial, destruction, assimilation and separatist approaches." She declared "the EU presents a new way of life for Turkey, for Turks and Kurds." She called for the Kurdish issue to be solved "through peaceful and lasting means" and expressed hope the EU would grant Turkey a date to begin accession talks.

...But Balks at Condemning the PKK

¶5. (U) In response, the Dutch Ambassador (as current EU President), the Irish Ambassador (the outgoing President) and the Austrian Ambassador all called on Zana to be more clear in her condemnation of terrorism in the southeast. The Irish Ambassador pointed out that Zana had not criticized PKK violence. (Zana condemned the July 2 bomb attack on the governor's convoy in Van, for which the PKK denied responsibility. Yeni Safak columnist Fehmi Koru hinted sarcastically that Zana's condemnation of the attack proved the PKK is not responsible.) Zana balked at the opportunity to condemn the PKK. She repeated that her trip through the southeast suggested that "the people" in the southeast do not want violence although some "small, marginal groups" support terrorism.

¶6. (C) The ex-DEP deputies were no more forthcoming about the PKK in one-on-one discussions. Asked if he considered the PKK a terrorist organization now that both the U.S. and EU list it as such, Selim Sadak replied "ask the people." He considers violence the natural result of conditions on the southeast, and compared it to the reaction of an animal poked at with a stick. Sadak advocates a general amnesty for the PKK and more democratization in order to end violence. European Commission political officer Sema Kilic asked Sadak why PKK violence continues despite a string of improvements in the human rights situation in the southeast; Sadak replied "ask the PKK." When UK Political Chief Ajay Sharma pushed ex-deputy Orhan Dogan on the PKK, Dogan told him that the ex-deputies do not have the political stature to break with Abdullah Ocalan and the PKK.

¶7. (C) Comment: Zana and the others put forth no new ideas about the southeast at the luncheon. Several EU diplomats, including the UK, Irish, Danes and Austrians, although pleased by Zana's release, left the lunch frustrated by her failure to condemn the PKK. So did we. End Comment.

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